

Supply—Labour

To what extent are we able to attribute it to the factors of automation? Possibly the minister could give us some indication as to whether or not studies have been pursued to show if automation has affected unemployment and could it be somewhat counteracted by the advantages to date of automation itself, or is it a fact that the machines, for instance, that make automation possible in our day are not produced in this country to any extent but are produced notably in the United States and as a result, while we have unemployment due to automation, we do not at the same time have fully the corrective measures to provide some counter-action?

I have been interested in this problem as one who lives in a great industrial centre of the automobile industry. I have recently been told, for instance, that automation has not had the effect on that industry that I had publicly suggested was the case. In any event this is a matter that very greatly concerns our generation. The Department of Labour, I know, has been giving some attention to this matter. I am sure we would all welcome a statement from the minister as to the effect and as to the result of these researches.

Mr. Starr: If the hon. member would hold his question temporarily I could make a statement in a few minutes.

Mr. Peters: Mr. Chairman, there has been some suggestion that the research and economics division of the Department of Labour was set up for the specific purpose of providing figures that could be compared to or used in conjunction with or opposition to those figures prepared by the dominion bureau of statistics. Since the present government has taken office has any consideration been given to eliminating the duplication that obviously takes place as between the two departments. Many of these figures we have on employment and employment trends are at variance with dominion bureau of statistics figures while others appear to be a duplication of the bureau's figures or statistical breakdowns of figures prepared by them. Has the minister found any justification for maintaining this division that processes and obtains figures which should already be available from the dominion bureau of statistics?

Mr. Starr: Mr. Chairman, the work in the economics branch is undertaken from the point of view of the labour market and does not duplicate the labour activities of the economics branch of the Department of Trade and Commerce which works from a labour trend and research point of view.

I made inquiries in this regard to satisfy my own curiosity and general knowledge on

another occasion and I have been assured there is no duplication. One group does a certain work and the other does another work both of which are vital. The work of the labour department is valuable in the compilation of these figures. As I say, I have been assured there is no duplication.

Mr. Pickersgill: Mr. Chairman, along the line that the hon. member has just taken, I have been really concerned over the growing margin between the estimate of unemployed which we all know the dominion bureau of statistics secures by a sampling procedure similar to the Gallup poll—one hopes it is as accurate—and the actual count that is made in the employment offices. The disparity between these figures has grown very markedly in the last two years. If the hon. member for Essex East happens to have his figures there I could point out that the gap—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Martin (Essex East): It is 445 in one case and 733 in the other.

Mr. Pickersgill: The figure in one case is 445,000 and in the other 733,000. I think this is a bigger gap than ever before except perhaps in one or two preceding months this year.

Some of us who represent outlying parts of the country know that even the figure of unplaced applicants is well below the number of people who are genuinely anxious to get work because some people who have exhausted their stamps do not think it is worthwhile to waste a postage stamp writing to St. John's or to Grand Falls to have their names put back on the roll when they know there are no jobs available in any case.

I have had some experience with this matter when I was an official some years ago and these two sets of figures are very difficult to reconcile.

I admit that they do not pretend to measure the same things. I am not going to try to make arguments on this side of the house that I used to reply to when I was on the other side of the house. The only thing I am concerned about—and I think a lot of us in this country who are really concerned about the continuing magnitude of this problem of unemployment are also—is the growing margin between these two figures. It is really quite a big gap between 445,000 and 733,000. It is almost 300,000, and that is not the kind of gap there used to be in earlier years.

Of course, the magnitude of the figures was less in earlier years; but I am wondering how